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# SEAPOW

GEN. MICHAEL HAGEE

Pivotal Changes for the Corps

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# Pivotal Changes

Gen. Michael W. Hagee is walking point as the Corps bolsters its force, fosters intelligence sharing and improves the reach of its aviation units

As Commandant of the Marine Corps, **Gen. Michael W. Hagee** will preside over some of the most pivotal changes to the force in nearly 20 years. He has outlined his commitment to sea basing and the maritime prepositioning of combat assets, allowing the Corps to vastly expand its maneuver warfare capabilities. Integral to this change is the Corps' transition to more versatile aviation assets, with attendant battles over the allocation of resources. Hagee also supports the concept of Distributed Operations, now in evaluation, which will utilize new and emerging technologies to revolutionize battlefield communications and tactics.



LISA NIPP

As the former head of I Marine Expeditionary Force, Hagee was a primary strategist in the lead-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has reiterated his commitment to maintaining the Corps as an expeditionary force in Iraq, and supports limiting its involvement in stabilization and peacekeeping duties. During his tenure as deputy director of operations for Headquarters, U.S. European Command (1996–98), Hagee was closely linked to peacekeeping and security operations in Bosnia, and understands the logistics and implications of those missions.

Hagee also served as executive assistant to the director of the CIA (1995–96), which gave him a unique perspective on the need to promote and expand intelligence assets and intelligence-sharing efforts. Hagee discussed these and other issues with *Seapower* Associate Editor Sue A. Lackey.

## Will proposed budget cuts impact the Marine Corps' operational capability?

HAGEE: We all obviously have some concerns there, when you look at how the cuts are going to grow in the out-years. Our job is to ensure that we are providing the right capabilities. It's not so much what the Marine Corps wants to do, it's the capabilities needed by the combatant commanders. They need force projection, which is one of the things the Marine Corps does.

The number of MV-22s will change the way we fly — it's an awesome capability. In order to take advantage of that you've got to have hoses, and in the Marine Corps that's KC-130s. We provide way over half of the rotor refueling capability from our KC-130s.

The Joint Strike Fighter [JSF] STOVL [short takeoff/vertical landing] version is very, very important to us. [During Operation Iraqi Freedom] over 55 percent of our sorties came from the AV-8B Harrier II [vertical takeoff/landing attack aircraft]. We had five squadrons over there, four of them were onboard the amphib — that's sea basing. The reason they were able to generate those sorties is that they were not very far behind the front lines of 1st Marine Division at various Forward Arming Refueling Point sites, and were able to rearm, refuel, generate sorties and return to the ship for their maintenance.

The JSF will give us even more capability. It's going to be able to reach much further than that little short-legged Harrier. Combined with the MV-22, it is really

going to change how we fight. It's up to us to articulate that requirement. It's up to us to keep the pressure on the engineers and industry to deliver it.

**Are there any specific programs affected by budget cuts that could impact operational readiness?**

HAGEE: I would be very hesitant to identify one [single] thing we can't live without. We are going to maintain our readiness for the conflict we have going on right now. We have argued in this current supplemental that we also need money to start refurbishing old equipment, and reconstitute those old platforms that we have used. We're going to do that. If we don't get the money to do that, we're going to take it out of other programs, because we *have* to be ready.

If there are pressures to reduce the budget, that is my biggest concern — how do we balance that? If we don't get the JSF-STOVL, it really limits us in what we have to do. The Harrier is going to go. I would also argue that there are other countries out there that want to buy the JSF.

**Is the training pipeline adequate to handle an increase in force strength?**

HAGEE: Congress authorized us to go to 178,000 last year [*previously the Marine Corps baseline strength was authorized at 175,000, which does not reflect reservists called to active duty*] and we're going to go to 178,000. We're recruiting to it right now, and our training pipeline can, in fact handle that. We'll probably go above 178,000. [The Secretary of Defense] has the authority to allow us to go 3 percent above our end-strength as long as we're at war, and we're going to take the opportunity to do that, thoughtfully.

It's not just end-strength, it is infrastructure, barracks, equipment, etc. If it comes out of our TOA [Table of Authorization], that means it comes out of our investments, because we're not going to take it out of readiness. We need to have an increase in our TOA to pay for that, and I will be articulating that on the Hill this year.

**Is one of your objectives as commandant to expand intelligence sharing?**

HAGEE: It's absolutely critical, not only with U.S. agencies but also with coalition partners. There are some concerns, and rightly so. We have got to come up with ways to safeguard what is very important [for our force protection] and then be able to share, especially on the tactical level, with our partners, whether they're agencies or foreign militaries.

**Will Distributed Operations facilitate battlefield intelligence collection?**

HAGEE: Distributed Operations is not a new concept,

and it's not the Marine Corps' operational concept. Expeditionary maneuver warfare is our concept. The most important weapons platform in that is the individual Marine. The second tenet of maneuver warfare is that you want it to be intel pulled — recon pulled. We don't have a lot of intelligence assets; we don't have a lot of reconnaissance assets. But [small units on a "netted" battlefield] can really act as that recon pull, that intel pull, without destroying the integrity of the Marine rifle squad, and without an end-strength increase.

People think it's a bunch of "A" teams running around and that's not what we're looking at. The integrated ground aviation logistics that we bring to the battlefield — we're not going to take that apart. If anything, the last two years have shown [we've gotten that] right.

**As small unit warfare becomes more prominent, will artillery be de-emphasized?**

HAGEE: No, especially not on the active duty side. We've always said that essentially we're a one-major-combat-operation type of force. Now can we swing to another one? Absolutely. But a big fight — we only have enough combat power to do one of them. In Operation Iraqi Freedom we *used* artillery — both to mass fires and to give us the capability to actually maneuver. I don't see that changing. I see artillery providing more accurate fires. The Excalibur [long-range, precision bunker-buster round] is coming in, and Lightweight 155mm [howitzer] is going to give us *more* capability, not less capability.

**Do you foresee the Corps increasing its emphasis on foreign internal defense — training foreign forces and counter insurgency?**

HAGEE: Yes. That is one of the things we're looking at. I believe SOCOM [Special Operations Command] does a fine job in that area, but they are pressed right now. In the battlefield of the future, and the global war on terror, Phase Zero, you want to be out interacting with militaries of other countries so they can provide for their own defense. We see a lot of opportunity out there — SOCOM sees a lot of opportunity out there. Every theater commander wants to do more in his area of command.

[From a legal standpoint] SOCOM does foreign internal defense, so there may have to be some legislation that we will have to seek to change that. But we have demonstrated that capability.

That's one of the ideas we are looking at; there are several other things that we're going to propose to the Secretary of Defense. We're going to provide more officers to SOCOM on their staff so there's a better understanding of the capabilities that the Marine Corps has.



Essentially, I've told [SOCOM Commander] Gen. Doug Brown: "We've got a certain set of capabilities; if you need them, let us know."

**Will units be able to exploit SOCOM resources without obligating the Marine Corps beyond its core mission?**

HAGEE: I think we're doing that right now. Without going into anything that's classified, our relationship between SOCOM and the Marine Corps in-theater — Iraq, Afghanistan — is really, really good. Some of those strikes you saw in Fallujah last year were a combination of SOCOM bringing their capabilities and combining with the Marine Corps capabilities in a seamless way very, very fast. That is something I would argue we probably could not have done three or four years ago. It is seamless now; it's essentially an integrated force.

**Will the relationship between the Corps and SOCOM remain as it is — cooperation without formal obligation?**

HAGEE: I see us coming closer and closer together in what we're doing. They are war-fighters, and we are force providers. We are going to provide those capabilities that Gen. Brown needs. There are certain capabilities that he has identified — small, niche capabilities that we have. If they need a capability, such as [Marine] Detachment 1, that capability is going to go to them, and they will use that capability.

**Do you anticipate any changes in MPFs [Maritime Prepositioning Force] — turning administrative assets into combat assets?**

HAGEE: Do I see MPFs rolling in to the beach? No, I don't. I see high-speed connectors; possibly ships that can go 50, 60, 70 knots, like an LCS. In San Diego, I saw an M [shaped] hull design. It's not there as far as an MPF ship is concerned, but it could be there as a connector. If we've got selective offload capability, and connectors that quickly bring what we need ashore, it's really quite exciting. Another thing we're missing is a C-130 that can land on an MPF, or that capability.

If you want to be able to transition quickly and smoothly from the sea to the land, you have to be able to do selective offload. You have to be able to do the arrival and assembly at sea. Our current MPF ships are dense packed, and we need a port in order to offload.

**Will you be changing the ship mix?**

HAGEE: We can't focus on one particular ship, because in order to put this joint combat force ashore it's going to take assault amphibians, MPF ships, small aircraft carriers like the LHA(R) [amphibious assault ship (replacement)] that we intend to develop, and it's going to take high-speed connectors. We're going to see a wider variety of ships. We absolutely still need the amphibians. We're still going to make an amphibious assault. We still have to have the ability to go in harm's way and to project combat power against a determined enemy. Such ships as the LPD-17 [amphibious transport dock ship] are critical. ■